



SB 189: Residential Service Agencies - Reimbursement - Personal Assistance Services
(Homecare Workers Employment Act of 2024)

Testimony of the Maryland Centers for Independent Living

SUPPORT

Senate Finance, February 8, 2024

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Maryland were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. CILs are nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. CIL staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. The seven Maryland CILs are part of a nationwide network which provides Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services.

The Independent Living Network submits this written testimony in strong **support** of SB 189.

Many individuals with disabilities depend on personal assistance services to support activities of daily living and to live safely and fully participate in our communities. Individuals with disabilities requiring personal assistance know their personal care assistants (PCAs) well and know how essential PCAs are to their well-being. Individuals with disabilities depend on a strong PCA workforce.

The shortage of PCAs has been acutely felt in the community of individuals with disabilities. Without PCAs, individuals with disabilities struggle with activities of daily living and are unable to fully participate in the communities in which they live. Without PCAs it is a struggle and sometimes impossible for individuals with disabilities to transfer from a wheelchair to beds and washrooms. Without PCAs it may be impossible for individuals with disabilities to get nourishing meals and necessary medications. PCAs offer care for individuals with disabilities in the most personal and intimate manner. PCAs assist individuals with disabilities to attend family gatherings, participate in community events and functions, and shopping. Throughout the pandemic, and even now, PCAs have been essential workers.

Individuals with disabilities depend on PCAs and how the PCAs improve activities of daily living and participation in the community. PCAs have the support of individuals with disabilities for the essential work that they do, and the improved job benefits they deserve. A stronger workforce, with better protections, is better for all Marylanders.

SB 189 will improve job quality for PCAs and will ensure that Medicaid dollars are well spent. The Maryland Independent Living Network **supports** SB 189 and **urges** a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration and anticipated support.

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